



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

of aid to the student. Thus on page 274, note to lines 12-14 a reference to Ibsen's Petition to King Charles dated at Rome April 15th, 1866, would have been in place. Other similar cases are page 31, lines 21-22 (Letter 79), page 81, lines 9-10 (cf. *Peer Gynt*, 246, 8, 3d ed.) and page 10, line 11 (cf. *Catilina*; first line), page 22, line 23, and page 24, lines 8-9, on the expression *med löv om hat*. Compare the expression *med vin löv i håret* in *Hedda Gabler*, pp. 144 and 191 and Professor Dietrichson's most interesting comment on this in *Svundne Tider*. But these are little things.

We welcome heartily this new addition to our working material, and hope that Professor Olson will find opportunity in the near future to present in a similar edition the results of his work on Kielland's *Skipper Worse*.

GEORGE T. FLOM.

University of Iowa, April 16, 1909.

THE POETRY OF CHAUCER. By Robert Kilburn Root, Ph.D. Boston. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906. Pp. viii, 298.

Chaucerian research, accompanied by a fuller appreciation of the poet, has made seven league strides since a reviewer of Ward's *Chaucer* in 1880 wrote, "We can hardly expect anything more will be known of Geoffrey Chaucer than we now know." Increasing attention has been paid to him not only in the graduate seminaries but also among scholars and readers in general. Dr. Root's aim, as expressed in his Preface, has been "to render accessible to the readers of Chaucer the fruits of these investigations, in so far as they induce to a fuller appreciation of the poet and his work," and he appears to have placed his shaft fairly within the clout.

The opening chapter is devoted to a description of "Chaucer's England," and puts clearly before the reader the distinction between the mediæval point of view and that of the Renaissance, closing with a hasty review of "the great movements of the fourteenth century, political, social, religious, and literary," in order that we may more clearly see "in what sort of a world Chaucer lived and worked." Perhaps the most interesting chapter is the second, having as its subject the poet himself, and being concerned with the poet's sources and with "what may be called his philosophy of life." Those who are but beginning the study of Chaucer will gain a fuller appreciation of the chapter if they will postpone the reading of it until they

¹ *Westminster Review*, LVIII, 308.

have read not only the remainder of the book but also a fair number of the poems which are therein discussed. They will then have formed opinions for themselves, or will at least be in a position to appreciate those which have been made for them.

The third chapter gives a clear summary of the discussion as to the English *Romaunt of the Rose* and an account of its French original. Single chapters are also devoted to the description of "The Minor Poems," *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The House of Fame*, and *The Legend of Good Women*, and the discussion of the problems connected with them. Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and his compilation of the treatise on the astrolabe are treated of in the fifth chapter, and the last four chapters are filled with the tales and doings of honest Harry Bailly and his "mery companye" en route to Canterbury, "the holy blisful martir for to seke." "A Chronological Survey of Chaucer's Life and Works," placed at the beginning of the volume, and "A Few Suggestions as to the Study of Chaucer," which are added as an Appendix, complete the study.

In the chapter upon *Troilus and Criseyde* are described somewhat fully the successive sources of the poem, the degree of prominence which they give to the hero and heroine, and the varying manner in which Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare have treated the theme. The gradual downfall of Criseyde is traced, and the author holds "after the newe world the space" in regard to Chaucer's treatment of Criseyde—that Chaucer has not ennobled the character of Boccaccio's heroine, but has merely made her a little more clever in deceiving her friends, and that "it is Pandarus, and not Criseyde, who is the dupe." Dr. Root has also clearly brought out Chaucer's skill in improving upon his sources, as for example, in the tales of the Prioress and the Physician (pp. 197, 222); he has pointed out the artistic triumph in the portrayal of Constance (p. 185); he has emphasized the architectonics of *The Miller's Tale* (p. 177); and he has rather strongly stressed the "undertone of melancholy" in the character of the Wife of Bath (p. 237).

As suits a work of this type, Dr. Root's style is easy and pleasant, and at the same time direct. His conclusions are conservative and incline to the saner and safer view. Thus, after admitting the possibility that Chaucer may have invented his "eight yere siknesse"² in accordance with the custom then prevalent, he concludes: "Still we must not assume the truth of such a hypothesis merely because the expression of this love

² See *The Book of the Duchess* (written in 1369) and *The Complaint to Pity*.

is clothed in artificial and conventional forms. Personally, I find the idea of a hopeless love, protracted through eight long years, out of harmony with the eminent sanity of Chaucer's nature. But who shall say?" (p. 58). The discovery at last of what seems to be proof that the much doubted Thomas was really the son of Geoffrey³ makes it also practically certain that Philippa Chaucer was Philippa Roet,⁴ and that by 1369 Chaucer had been married for three or more years. The period which is usually assigned as the birth-date of Thomas, 1364-1367,⁵ agrees with the inference, and the two facts taken together should be sufficient to lay forever the time-honored theories of Chaucer's late marriage and his hopeless eight years' love.

Another instance of the author's conservative point of view is his belief that the French marguerite poems served as suggestions rather than as definite sources for the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* (p. 139, note), and that the evidence which these poems present as to the priority of the B version of the *Prologue* is not sufficient to outweigh the aesthetic superiority of B and its identification of Alcestis with Queen Anne (p. 143), facts which point toward the priority of A. A further bit of evidence in favour of A's priority can perhaps be found in Chaucer's mention of *Troilus and Criseyde* in the two versions of the *Prologue* (A, ll. 265, 344, 431, 459, 531; B, ll. 332, 441, 469). We should expect to find more references to the writing of *Troilus and Criseyde* in that version of the *Prologue* the date of whose composition was closer to the date of *Troilus and Criseyde*, that is to say, in the earlier version—the subject of *Criseyde* would then be fresh in the poet's mind and frequent reference to her would be natural. Since Chaucer in the A version refers to his composition of the poem almost twice as often as he does in the B version, it would thus seem that A was probably written first.

As to the alleged meeting of Petrarch and Chaucer, Dr. Root says: "We cannot positively assert that Petrarch and Chaucer did not meet; but in the absence of any positive evidence of their meeting, we must admit that the probabilities are strongly against it" (p. 257). He does not believe, as did the writer in the *Dublin University Magazine* (LXXIV, 164), that Chaucer would not have written the tales which are objection-

³Skeat, *Athenæum*, Jan. 27, 1900, p. 116.

⁴Thomas Chaucer used the Roet arms; see the cut of his tomb in Speght (1602) and the remarks of Nicolas (*Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, London, 1843, pp. 60, 65).

⁵Speght (1602) says, "Thomas Chaucer was borne about the 38 or 39 yeere of Edward 3;" cf. also Nicolas (*Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, London, 1843, p. 108).

able on the score of their indecency had he known that the printing press was to be invented, nor does he believe that Chaucer was in the least deceived by his own apologetic argument for their insertion (p. 176). On the contrary he holds that such stories as those of the Miller, and the Reeve are by no means necessary to the plan of *The Canterbury Tales*; that they are, however, in no sense evidence of the immoral character of their author; and that Chaucer's serious defence of the tales is contained in the single line,

"And eek men shal nat make ernest of game."

Dr. Root is probably correct when, referring to *The Book of the Duchess*, he says that "Some attempt is made to create a sort of suspense by withholding until the very end the fact that the knight's loss of his lady is the irreparable loss of death" (p. 62). This could be proved by the allusions which the knight makes throughout his narrative to the climax of his tale, and the manner in which the lines just preceding the climax (1302-06) refer back to what has preceded. As suspense, however, in the stricter sense of the term,—as causing the reader to have any uncertainty as to the outcome,—the device is rather a failure, since the knight in his "compleynt" (ll. 475-486) has already plainly stated the cause of his "gret sorwe." Moreover, since Chaucer represents himself as having heard this complaint, his later ignorance as to the cause of the knight's "sorwes smerte" is, to say the least, naive. The chief value of the device seems to be that the poet is thereby enabled to give a sort of unity to what would otherwise be the interminable discourses of the sorrowing knight. This Chaucer does by causing the knight to insert in his narrative the lines already alluded to,⁶ which look forward to the disclosure of the cause of his grief, and lead the reader on until he arrives at the end of the tale and the definite

⁶ "For I am sorwe and sorwe is I.
Alas! and I wol telle the why." (ll.597-98)

"For now she worcheth me ful wo,
And I wol telle sone why so." (ll.815-16)

"I will anoon-right telle thee why." (l.847)

"But wherfor that I telle my tale?" (l.1034)

"'Nede!' nay, I gabbe now,
Noght 'nede,' and I wol telle how." (ll.1075-76)

"But wherfor that I telle thee
Whan I first my lady sey?" (ll.1088-89)

And especially 11.742-757, 1126-1144, which are the two most important passages.

statement of the death of Blanche. But even the device which is employed for the sake of unity only emphasizes the looseness of construction for which the poem is famed.

One may be permitted to dissent from the suggestion that "Corinne" was invented by the poet in order to increase the obscurity of his allegory of some love story of the English court which he has shadowed forth in *Anelida and Arcite* (p. 69), and to doubt whether the author has not slightly overworked the allegory in *The House of Fame* (pp. 128ff.). I should also prefer to make a less definite statement as to the poet's birth year than, "the date of Chaucer's birth cannot be later than 1340" (pp. 15, 59); there is no evidence that fixes 1340 as the maximum limit of his birth, but, on the contrary, there are indications which may yet show that "a little after 1340" is a safer guess than "just before 1340."

Not least among the commendable points of the book is the care with which Dr. Root has selected the references given in his footnotes; they have been well chosen and are neither too plentiful nor too few. In addition to them, mention might well be made of Sypherd's article upon "Chaucer's Eight Years' Sickness" in connection with the discussion of that period in the poet's life (p. 58); of Hamilton's *Chaucer's Indebtedness to Guido delle Colonne* (Macmillan, 1903) in the chapter on *Troilus and Criseyde*, especially since the question of sources is entered into rather thoroughly; and of Shipley's discussion of "The Arrangement of the Canterbury Tales" (p. 153).^{*}

ALFRED ALLAN KERN.

Millsaps College, Jackson, Miss.

^{*} *Modern Language Notes*, XX, 240.

^{*} *Modern Language Notes*, X, 259; XI, 145. I have noted but few typographical errors: the words "Student's Chaucer" (p. vi) should be italicised (see pp. 291-92, and elsewhere); "Geek" (p. 94) is for "Greek;" "in deed" (p. 136) should doubtless be "indeed;" and Professor Mead's edition of the *Squyr of Lowe Degre* (p. 200, note 1) appeared in the Albion Series, not the Athenæum Press Series.